

Chapter 4

The Struggle for Global Society in a World System

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Former American Sociological Association president, Michael Burawoy, argued that sociologists have a responsibility to help “represent humanity's interest in containing the unbridled tyranny of market and state.” In an increasingly integrated world economic system, this is especially important, since the globalization of capital has generated unprecedented concentrations of wealth alongside persistent inequalities within and among states. We need sociological theory that integrates our understandings of global structures with concrete ideas to guide efforts for social change. This chapter argues that sociologists and other social scientists can more effectively redress rising global inequalities if they become actively engaged in asking questions about how, given the material conditions society faces, we might help *empower* global civil society as an agent for change in the world system. This requires steps to both cultivate a global society characterized by a human rights culture and to enhance the skills and capacities people and communities have for engaging in politics at local, national, and international levels. This will require that we actively confront and work to dismantle the forces that have excluded more and more people from political participation while cultivating new spaces for democratic participation in today's world system.²

A stronger global civil society requires international institutions with real deliberative and enforcement capacities. It cannot thrive in the current system described earlier by William Robinson where the United Nations is subordinated to the transnational state—namely, the

global economic institutions, rich country governments, and the capitalist forces that shape these. Sociologists have particular skills to contribute to these efforts. They are trained to understand connections between social and economic structures and individual histories. They know how culture and institutions operate to shape the thinking and actions of large groups. They also have access to a wealth of research on how organizations work and on the interaction of structure and agency over time. They are researchers and teachers. These are all important tools for the construction of the sort of active, global human rights culture that is essential to democracy at local, national, and global levels. In this chapter I consider some possibilities for improving connections between the work of sociologists and the needs of the social movements for global justice.

It is clear that we need more concerted efforts to resist the institutions and political arrangements that help sustain current inequalities. And as my conversations with scholars from around the world show, these struggles are increasingly taking place on our own campuses. At the most recent World Social Forum, participants in workshops aimed at launching a new International Network of Scholar Activists identified three major areas where scholar activists were particularly active, and these insights should help others consider how their local activities might link to a broader, global web of struggle. First, scholar-activists have been involved in **resisting neoliberal economic policies on campuses**. They have done so by, for instance, fighting cuts in public funding, supporting living wage campaigns for campus workers, and defending access to public spaces on campus. While many of these issues can seem very local, our analysis of global economic processes as well as the fact that we see such similarities on campuses around this country and internationally shows that the sources of our problems are global. Second, they were **resisting the enclosure of the knowledge commons** by using direct

action tactics and by promoting open source methodologies to encourage information sharing. They also are working to raise awareness of how global trade agreements affect access to information around the world. Third, they were working to **support civil society** through their teaching as well as research and community activities. Below I outline a framework for thinking about how each of these tasks fits within the broader struggle for global justice.

Framing the struggle

In my research on transnational global justice activism I have found it helpful to conceptualize this struggle as one between two “rival transnational networks” (see Maney 2001). On one side we have the transnational capitalist class and its various national and transnational agents (including what Robinson calls the transnational state) working together with varying degrees of unity to promote a global order that favors the profit-seeking interests of capital. On the other side is what we might call the democratic globalization network, which seeks to promote a vision of global integration that emphasizes the expanding realization of human rights over all other aims. Democratic globalization proponents (and most sociologists) would argue that, while economic growth might indeed contribute to improved human rights practices (as neoliberals claim), it does not do so automatically, and it will not do so in the absence of truly democratic government. More importantly, neoliberal policies are not necessarily the best route to economic growth, and in some cases have been counterproductive. Thus, policy makers must emphasize human rights objectives over others if they wish to improve the human condition. This democratic globalization network consists of a much more diverse array of individuals, organizations, and government officials and agencies that work to promote alternatives to global capitalism in various ways. Actors in the network will vary tremendously in how much attention

and energy they devote to social change goals. Like the capitalist network, this network will vary over time and place in how unified and coherent it is. A strong challenge to global capitalism, however, requires a much more unified and cohesive network of democratic globalization proponents.

The network concept helps us capture both the fluid nature of contemporary transnational organizing and the variation in the kinds of actors that are involved in attempts to promote one rival vision or another. It also sensitizes us to how actions by opponents affect the possibilities for movements and visa-versa. We might sharpen our discussions of global capitalism and of resistance to it by considering how network processes operate to affect power relations and institutional practices. For instance, work by Sklair (2001) and Robinson (2004) on the transnational capitalist class provides insights into how the global neoliberal network exerts influence as well as where its vulnerabilities lie. We should seek to build upon this work to identify strategic opportunities to exploit divisions within this network and challenge global networking among capitalists and politicians. Similarly, we might use network theories to expand our insights into how strong collaborative ties can be built across very diverse social groups. It is to this latter question that I address most of the remainder of the chapter.

The network concept captures a wide range of actors and actions that are oriented towards a particular social change objective. An important contribution of the network idea is that rather than treating social movements as phenomena that are distinct from “normal” politics, it places what we traditionally define as “protest politics” along a continuum of political participation that ranges from the least risky and costly (e.g., engaging in political conversations, voting) to the most (staging violent revolution). Those of us who have been involved in them know that social movements are collections of individuals and organizations engaged in various

forms of collective action to promote social change. While scholarly writing generally emphasizes mass demonstrations and other “unconventional” forms of political action, in practice many movements involve political action that ranges from voting to lobbying to civil disobedience.

The rival networks framework helps sensitize analysts to the centrality of alliance-building to social change efforts. Because-- by definition -- social movements are relatively weak, to have much political impact, they must mobilize allies from other sectors of society. In fact, the mobilization of powerful networks of actors is probably equally if not more crucial in any framing struggle as the mobilization of ideas, as messages are more likely to find receptive ears among those with whom we have some familiarity and trust. Also, the nature of the modern state means that allies can often be found in government bureaucracies, among the many people whose work involves actually solving some technical problem or relating to a very particular constituency (McCarthy and Wolfson 1992). Movements can bring information and analyses to practical problems that government agents must address, and they can also help generate a popular base for an agency or official, offering officials a justification for agency budgets as well as a layer of protection from bureaucratic infighting. This is true both within countries as well as in global institutions (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith et al. 1997). Successful movements are those that can cultivate allies within government agencies, the mass media, churches, and other groups in society, including colleges and universities. When movement allies are found in places where they can influence the views of elites or the operations of the policy process, as well as the views of the wider public, this helps advance social change goals (Lipsky 1968).

Networks that link people and groups with movement ideas, moreover, can neutralize the impact of rival networks. For instance, by reaching out to schools and churches, anti-sweatshop

campaigners can help a wider range of consumers become more wary of corporate marketing strategies that make misleading claims about a company's labor practices. Fair trade and community-supported agriculture activists, for their part, plant the seeds of suspicion that capitalism is the only logical economic system by demonstrating how economic practices might be re-organized. And “guerilla gardeners”, “critical mass”/ “reclaim the streets” activists and other “culture jammers” encourage people to question widely held assumptions and practices and their negative social impacts.

Maney's research (2001) shows that successful challenges are those where social change advocates manage to effectively mobilize *resources* for their cause, take advantage of *favorable political opportunities*, and create *positive relational dynamics* within the network. While movements themselves cannot completely control the relative balance of resources and opportunities available to their particular network, thinking about the struggle in this way helps them map out the possibilities for both expanding their own advantages while also minimizing advantages of rivals.

Sociologists and other social scientists can contribute to the struggle for a more equitable and just global order by working to help this “democratic globalization network” mobilize resources—including participants, ideas, and access to information. They can also play key roles to help identify favorable political opportunities and strategies for taking advantage of these. Finally, they also may be particularly crucial as brokers that can foster positive relational dynamics in the network while expanding its boundaries. In a recent symposium in *Social Problems*, Michael Burawoy and a group of prominent public sociologists at Boston College summarize various ways they have engaged in this kind of bridge-building and boundary

expansion (albeit mostly at local and national levels), and their experiences and observations should serve as a useful guide to future work in this area (Burawoy et al. 2004).

The network idea, in short, can help bring our thinking and writing about social movements into the mainstream of social life. If we are to identify ways of changing the world into one that is more equitable, sustainable and peaceful, we must find ways to reach people in their everyday routines. Network structures are capable of expanding and permeating boundaries, and even individual scholar-activists may feel confused or inhibited from actively engaging in social change work if they feel they must join a particular organization or engage in civil disobedience. If we think of how the particular kind of work we do might contribute to broader network dynamics, we can find new and possibly innovative ways to contribute to social movements. Moreover, as social analysts, we can help social movement actors better understand the broader social network structures in which they are embedded and the various possibilities these offer for advancing social change agendas.

Mobilizing network resources

As many conservative think tanks and pundits have pointed out, universities are settings where critical thinking about global processes is nurtured. Universities have been shaped in important ways by social movements, and indeed the emergence of programs devoted to cross-disciplinary studies such as gender studies, peace studies, black studies, and even global or development studies emerged at least in part from the critiques of social relations articulated by social movements of the 1960s (Rochon 1998). Universities are in many ways crucial spaces that help nurture the development of what Rochon calls “critical communities.” Critical communities are supportive social settings and networks in which critical ideas about the state of social affairs

and ideas about alternatives can evolve and spread. They serve as incubators for social critiques and prescriptions for change, helping create ideological resources and networks that support broader social movements. We should not be surprised, then, that conservative politicians and activists have sought to curb academic freedom and chill political discourse on campuses in the United States as well as to limit public funding for higher education.

While the political climate in the United States in recent years has limited some of the more overt political engagement on campuses, scholars can and must continue to work to reclaim the universities as free spaces whose openness to political inquiry and debate are defended as essential elements of a democratic society as well as a productive economy. Understanding our role in shaping critical communities in the places where we work is essential to helping foster new generations of people capable of analyzing political situations and generating creative responses to complex social problems. The role of critical communities may be particularly important within a global context, since these communities help “[create] a map of the social and political world. Movement mobilization occurs when large numbers of people are able to locate themselves on that map” (Rochon 1998:161). The remoteness of global institutions, coupled with highly inadequate education and media reporting on these institutions (especially in the United States), mean that more work must be done to create spaces where people can learn about the global political system and their place in it.

Public intellectuals can also contribute resources to the democratic globalization network through their own research, writing, and speaking on questions relevant to struggles against global inequalities. Our intellectual contributions can help expand the reach of the network to new groups. While many of us have plenty of incentives to focus on the research and writing, perhaps fewer of us consider disseminating the results of our research through popular writing or

public speaking. Even fewer consider public speaking engagements that are truly public, rather than to audiences of other academics. High schools, retirement communities, and community groups of all kinds are often eager to bring people together to learn about contemporary issues. While it does take some effort to figure out how to organize these kinds of events and to speak in a way that engages these audiences, this can be rewarding in many ways.

Scholars can also contribute to the resources of the network by helping expand free and public access to information. This might simply involve working more consciously to help our students learn about events, problems, and viewpoints left out of mainstream media discourse. I was surprised to learn that my students believed they could be arrested just for attending a global justice march in New York City (even as student ‘observers’). Upon reflection, though, I realized that their understanding is shaped by mainstream media coverage of these events that focuses on violent confrontations with police and mass arrests. Few in their social networks are likely to point out contradictions between these images and Americans’ legal rights to free speech and assembly. The classroom is a space where people should learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and where they should learn about important debates of the day. Too often we think of our role as preparing students to join the workforce. But our more important role is to prepare them to be active and engaged citizens. This is in fact the principal goal of many liberal arts programs/institutions, although this mission has been overshadowed in many cases by an emphasis on training students for a globally competitive labor market. When it is appropriate to our courses, we should present critical and impartial information about protest movements of the day and their relevance to broader political processes and debates.

Another way scholars can help expand movements’ access to resources is to resist the growing commodification of knowledge. As I mentioned above, scholar-activists engaged in

discussions at recent World and Regional Social Forums emphasized the importance of and techniques for supporting a global “knowledge commons,” that would protect the rights of all peoples to information. This concept rests on the observation that in an information society, we must maintain free access to information or we will very quickly exacerbate existing inequalities. There is growing support for a “copy-left” movement to create an alternative to traditional copyright processes while also advancing direct action to undermine corporate attempts to enclose, or privatize, the knowledge commons. While we may feel little impact from this at our North American universities, our international counterparts report serious handicaps they face in their research and teaching because of limited access to copyrighted information. The newly emerging International Network of Scholar Activists (www.inosa.org) is working to coordinate and expand international efforts to democratize access to the information resources that are essential to survival in today’s economy. Sociologists are urged to join this effort as you also work to make your own published work freely available under fair use policies promoted by copy left.³

Political opportunities

Scholars can contribute to the efforts of the democratic globalization network to understand and assess the complex political context in which it operates. In an increasingly integrated global political economy, policy is affected not only by national level processes, but by an increasingly complex array of transnational ones. Public intellectuals can help demystify global politics by explaining the links between national and global-level politics and by offering analyses of how to advance particular campaigns within this multi-leveled polity. Many organizers are quite capable of analyzing local and national political contexts, but they have more difficulty seeing how their struggle might be advanced by making connections to

transnational politics. They also are likely to be overwhelmed by the range of issues and organizations working beyond their local communities. Indeed, in a survey of participants in a transnational environmental group, I found that one of the main barriers to local groups' participation in global campaigns was their difficulty in relating local issues to global processes. Public intellectuals can help people develop the skills they need to make such connections.

Looking back, we might ask whether the struggle for racial equality in the United States would have gone further than it did if it was framed as a human rights rather than a civil rights struggle. Many early civil rights activists embraced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an organizing tool. But as a recent Ford Foundation report details, cold war politics led these efforts to be cast as subversive and even treasonous, with lasting consequences. The report goes on to observe that "[t]his brand of cold war politics sought not only to discourage U.S. activists from invoking human rights in their domestic work, but also to distort the very meaning of human rights for Americans by eliminating its economic and social dimensions" (Ford Foundation 2004:8). Similarly, one wonders whether the U.S. women's movement efforts to defend women's right to reproductive choice could have been more effective if they were oriented towards establishing and defending such rights on a global rather than national scale, as at UN conferences on women's rights. While the U.S. government has refused to recognize women's reproductive health as a human rights issue, its interest in promoting an image of itself as a human rights leader makes it vulnerable to pressure in this regard. And while mainstream women's groups have not mobilized their base around this, conservative groups have secured U.S. aid policies that deny reproductive health assistance (including access to condoms) for countless women around the world. Moreover, a global standard would reduce the chances that recognition of reproductive rights could be denied by state and national courts. These

illustrations suggest the wide-ranging implications of the strategic choices of movements about the level of government at which to engage a struggle. We need more systematic analyses of the opportunities and pitfalls of engaging transnational processes as well as of limiting conflict to national contexts.

Public intellectuals can contribute their training in political and institutional analysis to helping make a case for movements to “go global,” but they also should be willing to stick around to help hammer out the details of what that actually means on the ground. Knowing the rules of the game does not make one certain of how best to advance a particular policy initiative, but movements can benefit from having skilled, attentive, and especially trusted political advisors throughout the course of campaigns (see Kleidman 2004). Moreover, given the strong opposition to many claims for equity, we need clever strategic thinking that can only emerge from engaged scholarship. Being active in groups working to promote policy changes can both help analysts to understand how policy processes play out “on the ground,” while enabling them to gain insights into the strategic possibilities of movements.

Positive relational dynamics

The rival networks model sensitizes analysts and activists to the centrality of network-building efforts to the course of struggle. Often social movement activists focus their energies outward, thinking about how best to reach their targets. Less thought is given to how to cultivate the social bonds of trust and solidarity that can help activists work together for the long haul. But as history tells us, without conscious efforts to foster positive relations among actual and potential allies, network participants can turn their struggles inward rather than outward, toward the collective struggle. Networks require conscious efforts to manage or coordinate the activities of widely varying network members with highly unequal capacities and political access. This task is likely to be far easier for the more ideologically unified and more centralized neoliberal

network than it is for the very heterogeneous and less ideologically cohesive democratic globalization network. But the current surge in transnational global justice activism enhances possibilities for strengthening the ties among a very diverse collection of actors promoting different, if complementary, visions of a global order.

Democratic globalization proponents are faced with the added challenge of mobilizing adherents who are –whether by choice or by fate-- at least materially dependent upon if not committed to the capitalist mode of production that is promoted by the rival neoliberal network (see chapter by Robinson). To win new allies, the network must demonstrate how people’s long-term interests are best met with a fundamentally different approach to politics and economics even where one’s short-term survival requires a paycheck. Ideally, movements can and should (and indeed many groups have long worked on this) develop their own labor markets that enable people to work outside of capitalist modes of production and exchange. Public intellectuals can help legitimize and spread awareness of these alternatives. As the limitations of capitalism become increasingly evident in environmental degradation and rising inequalities, it may become easier to convey this message.

Public intellectuals can play important roles in helping to link diverse networks of people who might be sympathetic with the aims of creating an alternative to globalized capitalism. The professional activities in which these individuals are involved are more likely to give them access to information and experiences that extend beyond their local community origins. Students and scholars tend to leave their local communities in search of knowledge and experiences, and this nurtures a spirit of inquiry that makes them open to new and different experiences and ideas. We are trained to empathize with people from very different cultural, political, and experiential contexts. This, coupled with analytical training, helps us articulate

broadly shared visions for social change and allow us to understand the differences and commonalities across different local cultures and sectoral groupings.⁴ Scholars also may have privileged access to government officials, enabling them to serve as liaisons between government officials and movements.⁵ Thus, we are particularly well-positioned to serve as *brokers* between different groups, making us potentially important players in processes of coalition-building that are central to any social movement, particularly transnational ones (see, e.g., Rutten and Baud 2005; Tarrow, 2005).

Creating positive network dynamics requires leadership. And analyses of the role of popular intellectuals show that they tend to be leaders in the movements within which they work (see, e.g., contributions in Baud and Rutten 2005). Again, this is not to say that it is only formally trained intellectuals who serve in such roles, but that the experience and training of intellectuals makes them well suited to fill this particular need within movements. Specifically, analyses of how leaders helped foster positive dynamics among diverse movement participants identified their role as translators, educators, innovators, and conflict managers (see, e.g., case studies in Bandy and Smith, eds. 2005). Organizations such as Project South and Global Exchange are just two examples of spaces where people with professional academic training are actively working to build popular knowledge and skills while also shaping broader movement campaigns. And scholars with background in conflict resolution and facilitation are vital resources for many movement groups.

Effective leaders helped translate between different constituencies, sometimes literally but often figuratively. Translation involves helping diverse groups better understand and appreciate the perspectives and needs of other network members, fostering empathy and a commitment to unity despite diversity. To do this, the translator must gain the trust of all relevant

groups, something that generally requires that s/he demonstrate a commitment to the cause by showing up consistently and contributing to the collective effort in various ways.

Effective leaders are also good educators. They help participants of differing abilities understand complex political realities and the various circumstances and perspectives of diverse movement allies. Ideally they develop skills at training activists with less formal education to be “intellectuals” (Rutten and Baud 2005) who will go on to lead and contribute to the expansion of the network. They are also innovators, generating and disseminating new ideas and analyses of the problems the movement faces and their possible solutions.

Finally, good leaders are able to bring together the ability to translate, educate, and innovate to act as conflict managers. Conflict managers must be able to anticipate lines of (inevitable) division among different groups and help head off destructive forms of conflict escalation. Sensitivity to the often very subtle manifestations of power inequities is a particularly important trait for leaders in the democratic globalization movement. They know when to bring groups together for dialogue, and they know when steps at de-escalation are needed. They can prepare groups in advance to avoid destructive conflict dynamics, and they can bring a broad perspective that might offer new insights into resolving differences without compromising vital interests of any group (on conflict resolution within transnational coalitions see Snyder 2003; see also Starhawk 2002: part 2; Wood 2005; Cullen 2005).

Beyond these tasks, public intellectuals can contribute to the democratic globalization struggle by working to foster more broadly the cultural values and identities that contribute to positive network dynamics. Essentially these values are ones that should be at the core of all democracies, namely tolerance of diversity, respect, equality, and a commitment to compromise and to nonviolent conflict resolution. Donatella della Porta and her colleagues have observed this

sort of culture emerging from settings of global justice activism. Their research at regional and local social forums has revealed among movement participants a sense of “flexible identities” and “multiple belongings” (della Porta 2005). In the United States and elsewhere, political parties, mass media, and other formal institutions of democracy have largely failed in their duty to help socialize citizens into the values and practices that are essential to healthy democratic societies, contributing to declining political participation in these countries. The failure to inculcate values of tolerance and respect within nominally democratic polities makes more likely the rise of nationalism and other separatist causes seeking to advance the interests of particular ethnic or cultural groups to the exclusion of the interests and well-being of others. The social forums might serve as models for expanding spaces for learning and practicing participatory democracy. And public intellectuals can help disseminate this model as well as help communicate about the linkages between local and global, between interdependence and democracy, and between politics and economics.

By working more self-consciously to help people appreciate how global interdependence creates multiple layers of social responsibility and belonging, public intellectuals can help nurture more inclusive and democratic cultural practices. By encouraging people to adopt “flexible identities,” this reduces the appeal of politicians who would mobilize people around nationalistic and other exclusive identity groupings. Creating a sense of “multiple belongings” can foster commitment to a global community that actually accentuates people’s appreciation for the unique features of theirs and other local and national communities. Such appreciation can help people find new ways to link the struggles of diverse groups, and it can also help them see possibilities for working in ways that complement others in the network.

Nurturing a Global Society within the World System

If our analysis of the contemporary global situation leads us to conclude that there is an urgent need for major social transformation, then how can we as individuals and as sociologists be part of a broader process of change? The framework outlined above advocates for a focus on strengthening the transnational network of actors working to promote alternatives to economic/corporate-led globalization (see, e.g., Waterman and Tims 2004). We might view such work as helping to build a global society within the world system. I summarize some more general ideas about contributions sociologists might make to this larger project.

First, a global society, as opposed to a world system, emphasizes common values, identities, and institutions that connect people across more traditional national boundaries. World system, on the other hand, refers to a global capitalist project that has for centuries glorified the individual and treated the world as a giant, if not endless, source of raw materials and markets. Rather than community and solidarity, the world system is guided by principles of profit-maximization and competition. Reorienting the world system means confronting the incompatibilities between a sustainable global society and world system and engaging people in thoughtful dialogue about what their preferred world might look like, and how we might get there. It means helping people to imagine themselves as part of a community that transcends their national context. Indeed, if we all must share one finite planet, it is imperative that we learn to think more collectively about how to manage it wisely.

Sociologists have many opportunities to help students and community members expand their notions of community, and we should encourage those we work with to think in global terms, to see themselves as global citizens. If nation-states are only “imagined communities,” (Anderson 1991) then certainly we can expand the boundaries to consider a global imagined (i.e., human)

community that might correspond better with the ecological and social realities we face. This identity work is being done in transnational social movements, and as sociologists we can surely contribute to this important intellectual task of fostering notions of a “global we” either directly, through participation in movements, or indirectly through our teaching and research.

As teachers we can structure a variety of opportunities for students to consider themselves as part of a global context. Whether we ask students to consider their role in global commodity chains, expose them to foreign cultures and ideas, or invite them to submit proposals to their own campus “social forum,” we help them appreciate how they are part of an interdependent and complementary global community. We also can challenge them to be more pro-active, critical, creative, and engaged global and national citizens. Encouraging curiosity about the world while helping provide basic road maps or frameworks that can help students make sense of it can help nurture global citizens and move us towards the type of global community we might imagine.

As researchers, we can expand our own perspectives by rethinking some of our research questions to ask if we would be framing them in similar ways if we were sitting in another part of the world. We might make connections to scholars from other parts of the world so that we can learn more about the similarities and differences in our respective work and life environments. We might join groups that bring us into contact with international scholars for either professional reasons or for the purpose of advocating for political change. These exchanges can only make us better sociologists, as they sensitize us to some of our own blind spots.

Another contribution sociologists and other social scientists can make is by offering analyses of how our political institutions (national and international) might generate more humane and just outcomes. Research in sociology has told us much about the dysfunctions of

institutions and about the possibilities for organizational change. What does it tell us about how national and international institutions might be reshaped so that they are more responsive, democratic, and/or effective? More prescription-oriented analyses are needed, especially those that bring sociological insights to our knowledge of global institutions.

A particular concern of mine is that global institutions appear to be closing rather than opening spaces for participation from civil society. This comes at a time when civil society's vitality and creativity is most needed to overcome U.S. unilateralism as well as to help the global community confront pressing global problems. One must also worry about what will happen as citizens mobilized around calls for global justice are told that they cannot be part of the decisions being made in Geneva or New York. Where will their energy and momentum go? We need to encourage more creative thinking and dialogue about what sort of institutional arrangements would facilitate more democratic input and accountability at the global level. Without it, we will watch as global institutions have more power over more issues while having less and less legitimacy in the eyes of an increasingly attentive global public.

Finally, this book emphasizes human rights as essential to the work of public sociology. And in parts of this chapter I have referred to the idea of a human rights culture, which many would see as a logical foundation for global society. Indeed, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a globally recognized set of ideals that people everywhere have come to embrace (even if their governments have not). United Nations officials and even member governments refer to the Universal Declaration to bolster the appearance of democratic legitimacy within the global system. Without people mobilized to make claims for the rights laid out in the Universal Declaration, the words themselves are meaningless, and our system remains illegitimate.

A human rights culture is also vital to efforts to curb mass violence and terrorism. We now have a wealth of studies of truth commissions designed to help societies experiencing mass violence and genocide heal. Virtually all of these truth commissions incorporate some civil society component, and fostering broad understandings of and appreciation for human rights principles (i.e., building a human rights culture) is an important part of what civil society contributes to these efforts (Borer forthcoming). If an engaged civil society and human rights culture are important to helping violence-torn societies heal, they are also essential to preventing mass violence in the first place. And if our aim in studying society is to learn what makes societies most healthy and productive for their members, we might take these two lessons to heart and actively promote ideas for enhancing democracy in the UN and other international bodies.

Conclusion

In short, what I'd like to leave readers with is the idea that intellectual workers have important contributions to make to efforts to promote greater equity and justice in our world. The first set of tasks contributes to people's understandings of global interdependencies and the operations of global political and economic institutions. Our analytical skills and informational resources can help those working for social change better navigate the complex environment in which they must operate. We can contribute to efforts to develop political strategies that are appropriate for our multi-level global polity. The second set of tasks focuses on helping groups develop lasting coalitions. Coalition work is essentially democracy work, as the values that help sustain voluntary alliances are the same ones that help bind diverse groups within a common democratic polity. Teachers, scholars, and political activists should work to be more self-conscious about their role in helping nurture democratic values, skills, and practices. Any work

that contributes to a global human rights culture is a step in the direction of a more equitable and just global system.

Organizers with the People's Movement for Human Rights Education claim that "democracy is a human rights delivery system."⁶ Indeed, those concerned with advancing human rights over the long term must work to insure that people have the opportunity and capacity to claim and defend their own rights. This is true both within particular countries as well as globally. Given this perspective, we should worry about the question of how human rights will fare within a global political order that is seriously lacking in democratic participation and accountability. Efforts to reform global institutions so that they reflect greater inter-state democracy as well as greater popular participation and accountability are the only way to achieve a more just and less violent world. This conclusion resonates with Mary Robinson's message to the 2004 meeting of the American Sociological Association.⁷ She urged sociologists to educate ourselves and our students about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and about UN programs such as the Millennium Development Goals, both of which –to be realized- require popular pressure to hold governments to their international commitments. Whether our research and teaching is local or global, we can certainly find ways to integrate ideas about the connections between these. How well we do this will determine whether a global society might eventually overtake the world system.

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Notes

¹ I am grateful to Neil McLaughlin for his contributions to my thinking on public sociology and to Judith Blau for giving me opportunities to write on this topic.

² This idea builds upon Walden Bello's book, *Deglobalization: New Ideas for Running the World Economy* (2003, Zed Books).

³ [If you're intrigued by the possibilities of electronic communication technologies and find "hacktivism" appealing, you'll be particularly inspired by this creative group.](#)

⁴ I don't want to suggest that formal training is a necessary criteria for defining intellectual leadership in social movements; some leaders develop these skills without such training. But certainly the tools required for scientific inquiry can be helpful in the process of integrating and assimilating diverse ideas and experiences into a coherent collective vision (Baud and Rutten 2005b).

⁵ [Even in the United States, characterized by a strong anti-intellectual tradition and a particularly hostile Bush regime, local officials and members of more technically-oriented agencies often seek allies from the ranks of intellectuals to help them do their jobs. And we might learn from our international counterparts how to expand our inroads in government agencies or at least to cultivate a more open and inquisitive cultural climate.](#)

⁶ See www.pdhre.org. The PDHRE web site is an excellent resources for details and analyses of major international human rights agreements, organized according to topic. The site contains useful pedagogical materials as well.

⁷ For a free copy of the text of Mary Robinson's speech, go to: [\[?? www.sociologistswithoutborders.org??\]](http://www.sociologistswithoutborders.org).